

NEW YORK TIMES  
22 November 1985

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE A15

# *New Pacific Air Pact Lets Planes in Trouble Land in Soviet*

By RICHARD WITKIN

The Soviet-American-Japanese civil aviation pact announced in Geneva sets up the first procedures for foreign airliners or other civil planes to make emergency landings in the Soviet Union, the chief American negotiator said yesterday.

Until now, planes in trouble over the North Pacific in areas closer to Russian territory than to American or Japanese airfields have had no ready means for contacting Soviet authorities to authorize them to set down. "We have broken through a longstanding aviation barrier there," said the American official, Donald R. Segner, an associate administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration.

## Disclosure in Communiqué

Equally important, he said, was the creation of procedures to help civil aircraft get back on course — or be notified they were off course — after having gotten lost or having strayed into another nation's airspace.

The pact was signed in Washington on Tuesday and was disclosed in the communiqué from the Geneva summit meeting. The document said President Reagan and Mikhail S. Gorbachev viewed the development

"with satisfaction."

The three-nation negotiations were undertaken after a Soviet jet fighter shot down a South Korean Boeing 747 airliner that had flown over the Soviet island of Sakhalin on Sept. 1, 1983. All 289 people on the jumbo jet were killed. The Soviet Government charged that the plane had been on an espionage mission but an inquiry conducted by the International Civil Aviation Organization found no evidence that the plane had been spying.

## Up to 8 Months Needed

Mr. Segner, a former test pilot, said that all the technical details of new direct phone links between Soviet and Japanese air traffic centers and other improvements in communications had been worked out. He said the improved network was expected to go into operation in six to eight months. The Reagan Administration gave final formal approval to the pact before it was signed Tuesday, Mr. Segner said, and the formal approval of the Soviet and Japanese Governments was considered a formality.

Mr. Segner said six to eight months would be required before implementation because time was needed for the installation of com-

munications equipment and for the training of some Soviet technicians. In accordance with worldwide practice, English will be the language for handling air-traffic problems under the pact.

A crucial element of the system will be a direct phone link between the air traffic control stations at Khabarovsk in the Soviet Union and in Tokyo. This will be backed up, Mr. Segner said, by telegraphic and radio links.

## Rapid Notification

There have long been direct telephone links between the Japanese center and the American traffic control center in Anchorage, Alaska. It was from Anchorage that the Korean plane, Korean Air Lines Flight 007, took off on a trip to Seoul along a standard flight path that passes near the Kamchatka Peninsula in the Soviet Union. Instead of following the flight path, the plane began easing too far west soon after its takeoff, and it was hundreds of miles off course in Soviet airspace when it was destroyed by a Soviet jet.

Under the system in effect at the time, there was no procedure for contacting Soviet civil air authorities to try to rectify the situa-

tion even if the crew, or American or Japanese authorities, had known what was happening.

Soviet air traffic stations were not involved because the flight's intended course lay outside the airspace they were responsible for.

With the new system, Mr. Segner explained, the Russians can be rapidly notified of a navigation problem and a stray plane can be directed back to its proper route.

Similar assistance will be available for planes threatened by a breakdown or fire in flight.

"If such a plane was over the Pacific," Mr. Segner said, "and it was too far from an American or Japanese airfield, we will be able to contact Khabarovsk. We could describe the emergency and relay instructions back to the plane so that the plane could attempt an emergency landing in Russia if it was close enough."

Other provisions of the new pact establish procedures for dealing with hijackings along the route. The communications links, Mr. Segner said, will be in operation 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and they will be checked every day to make sure they are working properly.